

Interview Summary

Capsizing of the Charter Fishing Vessel TAKI TOOO at Tillamook Bar On June 14, 2003

Witness: Stephen Dana
Operator of the M/V OAKLAND PILOT

Date: June 15, 2003

Location: On board the OAKLAND PILOT at
Garibaldi Small Boat Harbor, Oregon

Persons present: W. R. Woody, NTSB
Peter Wood, Deputy Sheriff, Marine Patrol, Douglas County
Sheriff's Office
Kenneth M. Lawerenson, Commercial Fishing Vessel
Safety Coordinator, Thirteenth Coast Guard District

Statement in response to Questioning:

Captain Dana had been operating charter-fishing vessels from Tillamook since 1969. He had obtained his first license in 1985, and he currently holds a 100-ton masters license. He regularly operates the OAKLAND PILOT. He had known Doug Davis for about 25 years.

He recalled that on the morning of June 14, 2003, there was an ebb tide and this would cause higher waves at the bar. As the ebb became slack, the waves could be expected to become smaller.

He arrived at the jetties sometime about 0645 to 0700. He recalled that the NORWESTER, operated by, Tron Buell, arrived a little later, but that the NORWESTER was the first boat to proceed out across the bar. He recalled that the Coast Guard 47-footer was inside jetties near the tower, and that the TAKI TOOO also was waiting near the tower. He stated the F/V AMANDA, operated by John Ward also arrived a short time after his vessel. After the NORWESTER crossed, he heard Tron Buell inform the TAKI TOOO by radio that conditions were not good and not to be in hurry, and that there was debris and some logs in the water near the jetties. He recalled that the D&D operated by Bobby Bales was also between the jetties waiting to go out.

He believed the TAKI TOOO was a better handling boat and more stable than the D&D.

Captain Dana explained that there had been rains with run off carrying debris and logs into the sea. The changing tide then brought the debris back toward land.

He stated that weather information was available from NOAA on the Internet at www.noaa.gov and that he had obtained a report of the weather from NOAA.

He took his vessel to a position near the tips of the jetties where he could see around the north jetty to toward the north to observe the waves. He stated that the main direction of the swell or waves was from the west northwest and that there were some swells from the southwest. He estimated that the swells were 15-16 feet high out at the green can buoy

He explained that the waves come in sets and at the time the waves were coming in sets of 4, 5 or more waves and that there is usually a lull between sets. So it is a matter of observing the incoming waves long enough to determine the number of waves per set and thus be able to recognize when a lull between sets will occur and how long the lull may last.

He stated that he saw an opening in the waves and crossed the bar about 0700.

Captain Dana complained that conditions at the bar were becoming worse and the charter boat operators were losing 20 to 30 days per year. The season for taking passengers out for fishing starts each year about mid March and lasts until mid September.

He explained that scouring has caused the tip of the north jetty to bend toward the south, and that approximately 200 feet of the south jetty has been destroyed. The jetty tips are now back to where the surf breaks. Also for some years it has not been possible to proceed west across the bar because of shoaling, and that outbound vessels must either proceed out on a southerly or a northerly course. He strongly recommended that the jetties be extended and that the bar be dredged out so that boats could proceed westerly across the bar.

He stated that the Coast Guard can restrict recreation vessels and 6-pack vessels from crossing the bar when sea conditions are rough and that such restrictions were in effect that morning; however, the Coast Guard does not restrict the passage of inspected vessels or commercial fishing vessels.

Captain Dana stated that he had the passengers sit down while crossing the bar, but he did not request passengers to wear life jackets. He stated that requiring passengers to wear lifejackets would frighten them.

He emphasized that the decision to cross the bar or not to cross is solely up to the captain of the vessel. No one will tell the captain to cross or not to cross the bar.